

WORKPLACE HIV POLICY GUIDELINES



WARSI SEWA SADAN

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Foreword

This document presents organizational policy and practice within Warsi Sewa Sadan (WSS). It applies to WSS personnel (staff and volunteers). While the policy attempts to be as comprehensive as possible, some issues, particularly legal issues, are specific to India.

What are HIV and AIDS?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system. The body is therefore less able to fight off infections. People who have HIV infection are HIV positive (HIV+) AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, which is a collection of signs and symptoms resulting from infection with HIV.

HIV enters the body through contact with infected body fluids. The main routes of transmission are:

- Sexual intercourse
- Contaminated blood products
- Contaminated needles, syringes and cutting instruments such as razors
- Mother to child

Prevention

WSS HIV / AIDS in the Workplace Guidelines

There is no vaccine that can prevent HIV. Therefore protection is by understanding the facts and following appropriate behaviour.

- WSS will provide sufficient updated information to educate staff and volunteers about protection from, and living with, HIV/AIDS.
- It is good practice to provide HIV/AIDS and Health and Safety training:
 - (1) On every DTS
 - (2) On briefing new staff and outreach teams.
 - (3) Regular training, but at least once every year for staff
- In response to training, WSS staff and volunteers should take precautions wherever possible to avoid placing themselves and others at risk from HIV exposure.
- Health and safety policy and practice should be up to date and applied in every day life.
- Post exposure prophylaxis: In the event of a situation where there has been potential exposure to HIV (such as needle-stick injury or rape), medical advice should be sought as soon as possible to assist in limiting transmission.

Non-discrimination

- WSS does not discriminate against those who are HIV positive.
- WSS considers applications regardless of HIV status.

- WSS does not consider HIV infection a basis for suspension or termination of service. HIV infection does not, in itself, constitute a lack of fitness to work.
- WSS staff or volunteers who are, or are suspected to be affected by HIV/AIDS, should be protected from stigmatization and discrimination by other staff. HIV is not spread through ordinary work or social contact.
- There is no medical reason for unwillingness to work with others who are HIV positive. WSS staff or volunteers who are HIV positive may live on base, using the same facilities such as bathrooms, just like any other person.
- Good information and training helps to prevent discrimination and prejudice.

HIV Testing and Confidentiality

- WSS aims to provide a loving environment in which people feel free to share personal information and receive organizational care and support.
- Subject to national law, testing for HIV is not compulsory within WSS. Applicants are not obliged to declare their HIV status, nor whether they have been tested for HIV.
- Testing is strongly recommended e.g. if an individual has been at risk, wants to marry, or become pregnant. Professional advice and counseling should always accompany HIV testing.
- Confidentiality should be maintained with respect to a person's HIV and test status. Only the person tested has the right to release information regarding his/her status.
- If the person decides to share this information, it remains confidential to whom the disclosure is made. Others will not know unless the person agrees.
- Confidentiality may be broken only if an HIV positive person rejects warning and is putting other lives at risk, without them knowing. In such cases, reference should be made to national legal policy on disclosure.

Care

There is no cure for HIV/AIDS. Drug treatment, where available, can delay progression of the disease. This disease affects mainly the young productive members of society, leaving families and communities lacking cares and people able to work.

- WSS will treat people living with HIV as any other staff member or volunteers. They will be encouraged to continue to work as long as they are medically able. Depending on their medical condition, flexible working hours and time off for counseling and medical appointments, transfer to lighter duties, part-time work, extended sick leave, and return to work arrangements can be made.
- Care for those who are HIV positive would be holistic: physical, emotional, social and spiritual to strengthen self-esteem. It is recommended that support is also sought from family, counselors and community groups to enable persons living with the virus.
- WSS will offer referral for supportive counseling as available.
- Maintaining health, balanced diet and exercise assists general well being, including those who are HIV positive.

- People living with HIV have lowered immunity and greater vulnerability to sickness. Therefore it is important that all WSS personnel have medical attention for illnesses so they do not put others at risk.
- Medical expenses are the responsibility of each individual WSS staff or volunteers. WSS is not liable to cover costs of health care, funerals nor dependants.
- WSS recommends that all staff and volunteers have adequate medical insurance for appropriate medical care and emergencies.
- WSS does not have staff or facilities to provide hospice care. Each situation needs to be dealt with sensitively, involving the person's family, friends wherever possible. Offering additional support to the family and/or friends of those who are infected may also enable them to cope with the impact of HIV on their lives; however this should not compromise confidentiality.

WSS responsibility

- Protection from HIV is the responsibility of each individual.
- WSS leaders at each location are responsible for:
 - (1) Knowledge of WSS India HIV/AIDS policy
 - (2) Knowledge of national laws and policies related to HIV/AIDS and employment rights.
 - (3) Briefing new staff and volunteers about the policies
 - (4) Inclusion of HIV/AIDS policy in DTS and staff training
 - (5) Management of staff, teams and departments to minimize problems related to HIV/AIDS.
 - (6) Information on local centers for voluntary HIV testing, counseling and health care. If available, emergency telephone numbers should be made known to staff in case of accidents, assaults, rape, etc.
 - (7) Promotion of a safe, healthy, caring, non-discriminatory environment
- At every base, specific staff should be trained in health and safety, and encouraged to give advice:
 - (1) To leadership on best practice in difficult or sensitive situations.
 - (2) On where to obtain voluntary counseling for pre and post-HIV testing
 - (3) On prevention of mother to child transmission
 - (4) On post-exposure prophylaxis in case of emergency
 - (5) On local access to affordable anti-retroviral treatment, with counseling.
 - (6) To update with current knowledge, prevalence (percentage of people infected) and Practice in HIV/AIDS issues

Appendix 1

Health and Safety measures:

- Precautionary measures should be taken to reduce risk of HIV transmission.
- Good hygiene should be kept on each base, such as in food preparation.

- Universal precautions should be followed when dealing with body fluids (see section on Health care settings below)
- Appropriate disinfectants and cleaning materials should be available, not only to prevent the risk of possible transmission, but also to protect those who are HIV+ from possible sickness
- First aid kits should be available on all bases, WSS vehicles and at all outreach locations, containing items such as plasters, disposable gloves and oral resuscitation mouthpieces. Items such as disposable syringes and needles should be carried by WSS staff and volunteers in places where there is no guarantee of the proper sterilization of such materials.
- Where screening of donated blood may not be guaranteed, staff and volunteers should be aware of safe sources. It is advisable that WSS teams are aware of each other's blood type before going on outreach to a place where screening of donated blood can not be guaranteed. If, in an event of an accident, the need occurs for blood to be given to a staff member or volunteers, other team members can make themselves available as a blood donor. Blood typing and HIV testing should be done before blood is given (never assume a person is HIV negative).
- WSS should take action to reduce the possibility of accidents which present a risk for HIV infection in places where safe blood supplies are uncertain. In particular, transport policy should include:
 - Vehicle maintenance and insurance
 - Use of seat belts
 - Qualified drivers
 - Use of helmets for motor-bike riders
- All equipment should be checked regularly and withdrawn from use if damaged.

This 'workplace HIV Policy' has been prepared with mutual discussion during the meeting arranged for the purpose **making the workplace policy for Warsi Sewa Sadan**. It is mandatory that the staff and volunteers follow the guidelines given in this policy.

Mrs.Meraj Bano

Secretary

Dated: